

Introduction

For the past year we've been going through the book of Romans. In chapters 1-11 the apostle Paul has laid a theological foundation for faith and practice.

In the remaining weeks that I have with you we're going to focus on chapter 12 which deals with Christian living. This is the practical section of Romans.

You'll notice the word "therefore" in the first clause of verse one. Everything that is in chapter 12 is based on the doctrine laid out in all the previous chapters.

In other words, if you try to live out the Christian life without a solid doctrinal foundation, it's not going to work. The theme passage for this entire epistle is:

Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Gospel & Salvation

Righteousness & Faith

If those terms are not well defined and understood, you will miss the point of Romans and what it means to be a follower of Christ. Now in chapter 12 we move into very practical areas of Christian living such as hospitality.

Romans 12:1-13 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

What does hospitality have to do with the Gospel? That's what we're dealing with today. Our text is verse 13.

Romans 12:13 (ESV)

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Let's define our terms. Simply put hospitality is learning how to provide for the physical and spiritual well-being of those around us.

In the NT the Greek word for hospitality literally means "love of strangers." Verse 13 includes both believers and those outside the fellowship.

Hebrews 13:1-2 (NIV)

Keep on loving each other as brothers. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

You may remember how Abraham entertained the three strangers on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah. He considered it an honor and his duty to show them hospitality.

Hospitality is a virtue that is both commended and commanded in the Scriptures.

Over and over again the Hebrews were told to show hospitality to the stranger and alien in their land, remember that they too were once aliens in Egypt.

As an itinerate preacher, JESUS and the disciples relied on the hospitality of others throughout their ministry together. JESUS often mentioned meeting the practical needs of others as that which would be commended on the day of judgment.

Matthew 25:34-35 (ESV)

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

In Biblical times travelers were depended on the hospitality of others. Putting the needs of others in front of your own needs was a necessity in that culture.

But the virtue of hospitality goes deeper than that. It's more than fulfilling on obligation, hospitality is a matter of the heart.

1 Peter 4:8-9 (ESV)

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

In Timothy and Titus church leaders are to be those who are hospitable. It takes work to welcome others into your home, but it's a sign of maturity when it's done with cheerfulness.

That takes us to our second point. Followers of Christ are to practice hospitality as living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

A living sacrifice is one who has offered not only their physical bodies to the LORD, but also their thoughts, expectations and priorities. All of this is offered to God as an act of devotion.

JESUS spoke of the devoted servant who was diligent in doing everything that was expected of him by his master.

Luke 17:10 (ESV)

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done

what was our duty.”

Perhaps you’ve had the experience of staying in someone’s house as a guest, and they make it seem like you’re doing them a favor by allowing them to host you in their home. That’s being a living sacrifice.

Churches will often have a hospitality committee. They help to arrange for housing for guest speakers and groups.

But there’s so much more to hospitality within the Body of Christ.

There’s going out of your way to **greet those who are new**. There’s **inviting people over to your home for a meal**. There is being alert and sensitive to the practical needs of the moment.

- **Filling in when the nursery is shorthanded**
- **Helping to clean up after a church function**
- **Providing meals for families at important times**
- **Assisting those with special needs**

Hospitality is more than just being helpful and friendly. It’s looking for opportunities to show the love of Christ and seizing it for His honor.

Author Ashlee Proffitt offers answers to four misconceptions about hospitality.

1. Hospitality is all about opening my home

Answer: Hospitality begins with opening my heart

2. Hospitality is for the cooks and crafty

Answer: Hospitality is for the willing and obedient

3. Hospitality is meticulous planning and flawless execution

Answer: Hospitality is often messy and unexpected

4. Hospitality is for my friends

Answer: Hospitality is for all

Offering hospitality as a living sacrifice is putting the needs of others in front of your own needs in light of what Christ did for us on the cross. Churches that do this are counter cultural.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (ESV)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Rosaria Butterfield was an activist in the LGBTQ community before the LORD graciously opened her heart to the Gospel. She is now married to a Reformed Presbyterian Pastor.

The LORD used the hospitality of another pastor and his wife who welcomed this ardent critic of the Christian faith into their home.

Over time she saw the love of Christ demonstrated in flesh and blood, along with the breaking of bread.

I love the quote: **Hospitality is when someone feels at home in your presence.**
(picture)

A few decades ago Francis and Edith Schaeffer opened up their home to countless young and restless intellectuals in their L'Abri fellowship.

It was a safe haven and refuge for those who were searching for answers to the great questions of life and faith.

Hospitality is more than just being helpful and friendly. It's looking for opportunities to show the love of Christ and seizing it for His honor.

You do this with your neighbors, with your brothers and sisters sitting among you here in church, with those you happen to meet in the marketplace.

Have you noticed that as a culture we're becoming more and more isolated from each other? Wendell Berry has said that the biggest loss of modernity is the retreat from the front porch to the living room.

Instead of greeting your neighbors as they pass by, we're inside watching television.

And now these days when people are walking around in public, they rarely make eye contact. What are they doing?

Looking down at their phones, as if their little virtual world is more important than the people around them in flesh and blood.

Speaking of flesh and blood, the LORD'S Supper is the invitation of JESUS for sinners to be welcomed at his table.

The context of the LORD'S Supper includes the totality of His entire ministry.

He said, "Come unto me all ye who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Luke 14:12-14 (ESV)

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

JESUS also told a parable about the man who prepared for a great banquet and invited many to come, but most turned down or ignored the invitation, because they were too busy.

So the indignant host invited those who wouldn't normally be invited to any social engagement of importance; the lame, the poor, the crippled and the blind.

Those who are too busy to be at the LORD'S Table are excluded in the great banquet. But those who do come, will be greeted by the host of the table.

The first LORD'S Supper began by JESUS washing the feet of the disciples. It's a humbling thing to be waited on in such a hands on way by others.

Learning how to be on the receiving end of hospitality is important as well. JESUS was invited into the house of sinners as well as the homes of Pharisees.

In fact it seems that JESUS was welcomed more graciously by the unrighteous than the righteous.

When you come to the Lord's Table this morning, you come as a sinner in need of God's grace.

You are invited and welcomed to the table this morning only if you know that your need is so great that only God can meet it. **(picture; Come to the Table)**

By His death, resurrection, and ascension He has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit Who unites us all in one body.

Therefore we are to receive this Supper in true brotherly love, mindful of the communion of saints.

We come as members of an extended family. Imperfect, many times failing, but we are family.

We come to this supper together. We are united in our need of him and His love for us.

The Scriptures also gives us this warning and admonition:

This sacrament for those who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. It is for sinners, but for sinners who trust in the finished work of Christ for their salvation.

If you are outside of that faith, the LORD'S Supper is not yet for you. But at the same time, the Gospel call is extended to you.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. If you confess with your lips that JESUS is LORD, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Respond in faith to the Gospel and come to the Table.

The other admonition is this: If you are in unrepentant sin, not recognizing the Body and blood of the Lord, you should not partake of this supper.

I often see on social media questions phrased something like this: can a person be a Christian who is involved in this or that lifestyle?

The question is misleading. The LORD'S Supper is for sinners, but for sinners who look to Christ and Christ alone for their salvation.

As living sacrifices, we offer our whole selves to God holding nothing back. We're not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

If you know of any sin in your life, and desire to turn from it and be nourished by this Supper, you need to come to this table today.

But you don't hold anything back. If any aspect of your life is out of conformity to God's Law or His will, you let go of that sin and leave it at the foot of the cross.

We are sinners who belong to God through Christ. Our desire is to glorify God in all things. May this Supper serve in that purpose.

JESUS is the host of the Table we're about to come to. He welcomes you warmly, because He has provided everything that we need there.